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## PELOPONNESIAN JOURNEYS.

BY

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Greece is, probably for the majority of persons who have never visited that land, merely a country of the past, rich in associations and interesting because of the part it once played in the development of the world's history, but at the present day reserved for the shovel and the pick of the archæologist and for the researches of classical scholars. Yet, entirely apart from its ruins, modern Greece and its inhabitants offer to the traveller, who finds enjoyment in the picturesque in Nature and entertainment in the study of the life and customs of a simple folk, much that is of interest.

The most prominent natural features of the country are the numerous bays and gulfs which, broken by many headlands and occasionally dotted with islands, set far into the land, and the mountains which cover its surface in a perfect network. There is not, it is true, in Greece any single peak that attains a very great altitude; but, on the other hand, the number that reach a goodly elevation is unusually large, and this conspicuous magnitude of the many peaks forms the most characteristic feature of the Greek landscape. Almost equally striking, however, are the clear-cut outlines of the mountains, which are due in part to the hard limestone formation, in part to the absence of vegetation. For, in the course of the centuries, the forests have in large measure been destroyed, though even now in some districts considerable stretches of woodland are to be found, and with the passing of the trees the rainfall has decreased, so that during the summer months, when hardly a shower comes to moisten the parched earth, the country is for the most part extremely arid. But though we miss in Greece the cultivated prettiness of England and the grandeur of the Alpine scenery of Switzerland, its mountains, with their bold outlines sharply defined against the sky in that wondrously clear atmosphere, have a rugged beauty all their own; the skies above are as bright, as warm and as cloudless as those of Italy; the waters that wash its shores are clearer and bluer, were that possible, than those of the Bay of Naples; while on the hillsides there is an ever-shifting play of shadows, varying in hue from gray to black, from grayish blue to deepest purple, which adds not a little to the beauty of the

scene. To complete the picture we must add the dusky grayish green leaves of the olives with their gnarled stumps, the darker green of the vineyards, and in the early spring, when the foot-hills are covered with green shrubs and the plains are bright with the young shoots of the grain, the numerous wild flowers, the iris, the cyclamen, anemones, orchids, gorgeous red poppies, the lovely clustering yellow flowers of the gorse and countless other varieties, which in many places grow in such profusion that it is impossible to take a step without trampling their delicate blossoms under foot. There is probably, I think, no other country in Europe where the beauty of the scenery is so largely dependent upon the exquisite coloring of Nature, and, consequently, none of which a photograph or a lantern-slide gives so imperfect an idea.

But for me, personally, the greatest charm of modern Greece lies in the fact that it is as yet unspoilt by civilization and by the influx of sightseers that have overrun the rest of Europe. Here is a land where everything is not arranged to attract the tourist, and where the people are, for the most part, still content to live the same simple lives as their fathers before them. The atmosphere is that of the Orient, where time has not yet become so precious as in this bustling Western world, and where men still transact their business in a leisurely fashion, which we are unable, or unwilling, to follow even in our pleasures. In Greece, moreover, the railroads are not so old nor so extended as to have caused the people to forget that space exists, and the man who prefers to jog slowly along on the back of his mule or donkey, instead of being whirled to his destination in a train, is not regarded as an anomaly. As to hotel accommodations, those of Athens are excellent; those of the other large towns are, at the best, passable; while elsewhere the traveller is dependent upon the *μαγαζέιον* (*maga-zelon*) or village store, or else upon private hospitality, for shelter and for entertainment. All this has, of course, its drawbacks, and the traveller in the interior of Greece must be prepared to forego not only all luxuries, but not infrequently, even many of the ordinary conveniences of life. Most of the positive discomforts can, it is true, be avoided by travelling with a dragoman or courier; but the wise man, who possesses even a slight knowledge of Greek, will content himself with the services of an *ἀγωγάτης* (*agogidtes*), as the man is called from whom one hires his saddle beast and who accompanies one to take charge of it. By so doing the traveller is brought into closer touch with the people and sees more of their life and customs; while the *agogidtes* is generally a good guide

within a radius of several days' journey from his own home, and, though quite ready to cheat you in the bargain which you make with him, will, when once hired, almost invariably look sharply after your interests, and in case of a dispute will side with you even against his own countryman.

As for the Greeks themselves, they are an interesting nation, and with all their faults—and these are by no means so black as popularly painted—I found them extremely lovable. Dirty many of them unquestionably are, but it is, as a rule, clean dirt, by which I mean that it is the dirt of the fields. As for the fleas and other vermin, with which the majority of the peasants' houses are infested, their presence is not due solely to filth, for the natural conditions in Greece appear to be peculiarly favorable to their propagation; and, as I have been informed by both educated Greeks and resident foreigners, the only way in which a house can be kept free from these pests is by an unceasing vigilance and an almost endless housecleaning, for which the ordinary peasant cannot find the time. That the Greek occasionally deviates from the truth may be a fact; that he is the inveterate liar which he is often represented as being I do not believe, for the number of instances that came to my notice in which a lie of any kind was told was very inconsiderable. Similarly, as regards the charge of dishonesty which we so often hear brought against them, my own experience would lead me to form quite the opposite opinion, for during the entire ten months that I spent among them I never had a thing of any kind stolen. One criticism, however, that can very justly be laid at their door, if we judge by our own standards, is that of unscrupulousness and of cheating in business transactions; but here the fault lies not so much with the individual as with the standard and the customs of the country. The transaction of business upon a basis of fixed prices is practically unknown in Greece, and, since bargaining is always expected, the seller invariably asks much more than the sum that he expects, and is willing, to take. And if you will only meet him on his own ground and fight him with his own weapons until you have compelled him to accept a fair price, he will not only be perfectly content but will also feel far more respect for you than he would had you verified the old adage, "A fool and his money are soon parted," by paying him the price first asked. But once this necessary preliminary had been gone through with and the bargain made, I found that they could generally be depended upon to carry out the terms of their contract. Yet, combined with business sagacity and shrewdness of a high order, you often find an ingenu-

ousness and simplicity which charms and attracts one by its very childishness. And like a child, too, the Greek is eager, impetuous, keenly susceptible to emotion, easily swayed by the impulse of the moment, and quick of temper, but rarely sullen, for his anger gathers and bursts and passes like a summer shower. Inquisitive as squirrels, they gather about you in every village at which you stop and ply you with questions as to your personal affairs. Yet all this is done with such perfect courtesy—and I may say, in passing, that it is exceptional to find a Greek who is not courteous and polite—and the questions are so plainly inspired by childish curiosity, pure and simple, that it is impossible to take offence. But apart from this frank and childlike simplicity, the trait that has always appeared to me most attractive and lovable in the Greek character is his unfailing hospitality. The person to whom you may come with a letter of introduction will place himself and his house at your command and seek in every way to be of service to you. Even the humblest peasant, at whose house you, as a stranger, may apply for a night's lodging, will receive you with a cordial welcome and will place his best at your disposal with a courtesy that goes far towards making you forget that you will be obliged to pass the night wrapped in a rug upon the floor instead of in a bed and that your morning toilet will, of necessity, be performed without the aid of a wash-basin or a looking-glass. Nor is the charm of your reception in any way marred by the knowledge that this same man, who is now seeking to the utmost of his ability to make you comfortable, will on the morrow present an exorbitant bill for the night's accommodations, for the Greek has the faculty of making you feel under these circumstances that he is, for the time being, your host and you his honored guest. And it is a strange thing, for which I cannot account, but nevertheless a fact, that when you finally ride away on the morrow, after having wasted perhaps a valuable half hour in bargaining before you have been able to settle the bill upon an equitable basis, it will be in a spirit of perfect friendliness, and in the future you will be sure to think of your quondam host, not as a rascal who tried to cheat you but as a person to whom you are indebted for generous hospitality.

To speak of Greece without alluding to its past is as impossible as to travel through the country without seeing the ruined monuments of former days; but as I wish to present for the most part the modern side of the picture, I will ask you to follow me as I retrace my steps over the ground which I visited some years ago during several trips to the Peloponnesus. As we approach Patras,

which is one of the centres of the currant trade in Greece, we see that the port is an open roadstead, protected by a long breakwater, behind which our ship comes to anchor. With its straight and broad new streets, its crooked and narrow old streets, its white stuccoed houses, and its broad, dreary squares, to which the pepper trees, with their graceful foliage and bright red berries, alone lend an element of charm, Patras is a typical modern Greek city of the better class. But even more interesting than the place itself to the traveller who has just landed are the strange street scenes and the unfamiliar costumes. The ride along the Gulf of Corinth, with the blue waters of the gulf hemmed in by rugged mountains on the left and on the right the littoral plain, with its vineyards, and the mountains of the Peloponnesus beyond, is one of the loveliest and most picturesque imaginable, for the railroad follows closely the curves of the shore, and as the train winds in and out around the various headlands the eye is met by a succession of beautiful pictures.

Three hours and a half after leaving Patras we arrive at the little station of Kiato, and, leaving the train, proceed on foot across the littoral plain to the village of Vasiliko, which lies some two miles back from the shore on the edge of the plateau that was once occupied by the ancient town of Sicyon. Here, in December, 1891, I passed a week in the house of a Greek peasant, George Demetrius, while engaged in excavations on the site of the ancient theatre. We found the people extremely kind and hospitable, and the experience, though in many respects a rather rough one, was not lacking in interest, nor was our stay unenlivened by amusing incidents. One that well illustrates the simplicity of the Greek character was a strike on the part of our workmen for higher wages. They based their demands principally upon the fact that they could obtain the pay which they desired by working in the vineyards; but when we disclaimed any wish to compel them to work for us for less remuneration than they could obtain elsewhere, and asked why they stayed with us instead of going to the vineyards, they practically destroyed their entire case by confessing with perfect ingenuousness that December was not the proper season for such work.

A half hour's ride from Kiato brings us to the straggling town of modern Corinth, which has grown up on the shores of the gulf since the destruction of the former village by an earthquake in 1857. The site of the ancient city, where the American School of Classical Studies at Athens are now carrying on excavations, lies some three miles and a half to the southwest at the base of the

Acro-Corinth, the isolated hill crowned by mediæval fortifications, which in olden days was the acropolis or fortified citadel of the city of Corinth. From this point we make a flying trip through Argolis, and visit the prehistoric town of Mycenæ, with its Cyclopean walls; the site of the Argive Heraeum, or famous temple of the Argive Hera; the prehistoric fortress of Tiryns, with its massive fortifications; the walled city of Nauplia, with its reminiscences of the early days of the Greek republic, and the Hieron, or sanctuary of Æsculapius, at Epidaurus, with its glorious old theatre. From Argos we drive past the famous Lernaean spring, where Hercules, according to the legend, overcame the hydra, and across the mountains to Tripolitza, the capital of Arcadia. From this town a pleasant morning's drive can be taken to the site of Mantinea to the north; but an even more charming trip is that to the southwest through the swampy, maize-covered plain of Frankovrysis and across the mountains to the ruins of Megalopolis, which lie in the centre of a broad plain some 1,400 feet above sea-level, and to the site of the ancient Lycosura, charmingly situated among the mountains to the west of the Megalopolitan plain.

Returning to Tripolitza we there obtained horses for our trip to Sparta, for, though there is a good carriage road, we preferred to go on horseback. Our animals, which were small, undersized horses, about as large as full-grown ponies, were equipped with the usual heavy wooden pack-saddle, very uncomfortable in appearance, but with which, by the use of several rugs and by riding sideways, one can get along very comfortably. Instead of a bridle you have a halter, and guide your beast by pressing the leading rope or chain against his neck. A more helpless feeling than comes over one if, under these circumstances, his horse bolts, it is hard to imagine; but to the credit of the Greek horse be it confessed that you and he generally get on very peaceably together, and that his docility and surefootedness soon gain your confidence. Sparta itself comes upon the traveller with the shock of a great surprise, for it lies in the midst of grain fields and vineyards, in the centre of the broad valley of the Eurotas River, one of the most fertile districts that I visited in the Peloponnesus, and the inconsiderable remains of the ancient city embowered among olive groves and plantations of lemon and orange trees—for you will find at Sparta the largest and most luscious oranges in the world—give one an idea of the home of the old Spartans very different from that which the name usually suggests.

From Laconia we crossed the snow-capped range of Mt. Tay-

getus into Messenia by the famous Langada pass or gorge, which offers to the traveller some of the wildest and most picturesque scenery in the Peloponnesus. After a visit to Messene, with its admirably constructed fortifications, now overgrown with ivy, where we were most hospitably entertained by the monks in the Vourkano monastery, we travelled northwards through plain and mountain to the wretched village of Pavlitza, the ancient Phigalia. Here our party separated, and the others went still further north to the Apollo temple of Bassae, which is admirably situated in a lonely spot among the mountains, and which commands one of those extended panoramic views that seem to await the traveller at the summit of every hill and mountain in Greece. Our own route led us to the west through the mountains for a day and a half to the sea, and then across sand hills covered with a sparse growth of trees along the seashore. Just beyond the ruined fortress of Samikon we again turned inland, and travelling through the country over which Xenophon must often have hunted—for Scillus, the place of his exile, was close at hand—we crossed the Alpheus, the largest river in the Peloponnesus, and just at sunset arrived at Olympia.

The sanctuary of Olympian Zeus, the great national shrine of the ancient Greeks, lay in the valley of the Alpheus, between the bank of the river and the Cronus hill, and the following morning we visited the confused mass of ruins which were laid bare by the great German excavations within the Altis or sacred precinct. At the foot of the Cronus hill lie the ruins of the Heraeum, the oldest Doric temple known, and it was in the interior of this building that the most precious individual find of the excavations was brought to light. Prior to that time no original work by any of the great masters of Greek art had been known to us; but here, on the 8th of May, 1877, the Germans unearthed an original statue by the hands of Praxiteles himself, the god Hermes bearing upon his arm the infant Dionysus, the god of wine. Finer statues the Greeks may have possessed, but the exquisite finish of the marble, the graceful lines of the composition, and the idealized beauty of the head, with its pure Greek profile, make this statue for us the most perfect example of Greek art, and it forms a fitting close for our pilgrimage to the shrines of ancient Hellas.